Issue Paper

Agility by a Different Measure

Creating a More Flexible U.S. Army

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Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. Army has been asked to deploy globally for operations ranging from major war to delivering humanitarian relief supplies and protecting populations. In response, the Army's leaders understandably seek to make their forces more agile. That means, in the first instance, lightening a force whose equipment was designed at the height of the Cold War, when the large Soviet threat and forward positioning in Western Europe meant that weight—so-called strategic deployability—could be given a relatively low priority in equipment design. The current interest in a medium-weight armored vehicle reflects the Army's growing attention to lighter-weight equipment.

The Army's recent experience in various stability and support operations (SASO)[1] suggests an additional, more subtle, yet still important dimension of the search for greater agility. That is the ability to create and deploy novel combinations of Army components that in turn plug into higher headquarters in unusual ways. The Army has

all of the elements needed to perform an amazing array of missions; it is truly a "full-spectrum" force in this sense. But because national strategy still focuses on preparing to fight two major theater wars, those components are organized, equipped, and trained as part of the Army's traditional warfighting hierarchy. Stability and support operations shatter that hierarchy and demand new skills and capabilities from Army leaders and their staffs. Part of becoming a more agile force thus lies in being able to adapt to different kinds of missions easily and quickly—but without compromising the essential Army mission of prosecuting conventional war. Significantly, the steps needed to facilitate these adaptations will also prepare the Army to better handle some elements of conventional war, in particular the demanding early-entry phase of major conventional conflicts.

The issue then is how to imbue the Army's structure—and by extension its doctrine and training—with sufficient flexibility so that it can respond with agility to any and all demands. And it must do so without compromising its formidable capability to prosecute conventional war, its foremost mission.

This Issue Paper explores this requirement. It begins by examining the demands imposed by recent SASO. It then describes how changes needed to facilitate such operations can also enhance the Army's capabilities in early-

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[1] Various terms are used to capture these missions. "Stability and support operations," or SASO, is the Army's own phrase for most of the operations it has been asked to conduct since its last major theater war in the Persian Gulf in 1991. The official Joint Staff term for these operations is "military operations other than war,"or MOOTW. But the phrase "smaller-scale contingencies," or SSCs, is also used, especially within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Although the definitions differ marginally in each case, all three phrases refer to operations other than major war. We use SASO here because it is the Army's preferred term.

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entry operations. Finally, it suggests some ways that the Army can respond to these demands.

REASSEMBLING FOR SASO

As an example of what stability and support operations can do to established organization and doctrine, consider the Army "unit" sent to Somalia starting late in 1992 to support the UN's humanitarian relief operation there. The Army gave that mission to the 10th Mountain Division, which took the division headquarters element and a combat brigade. But as Figure 1 shows, division personnel were outnumbered two-to-one by corps and theater army personnel from higher-level units required to handle Somalia's unique demands. Overall, the operation "stretched" the 10th Division's command capabilities in four ways, exposing shortfalls in both training and technology normally available at the division level:

- Numerous attachments confronted the division commander and his staff with *much greater span of control* than they would normally confront in war. Because the attachments came from higher levels of the Army, they taxed the division's normal expertise and communications capabilities. It took several corps- and theater-level signal companies simply to tie the overall unit together.

- Part of the command and control problem stemmed from the *wide geographical dispersion* of the 10th Division's various units. Expected to cover roughly a 30-kilometer front in wartime, the division deployed elements out to over 100 kilometers in Somalia. This placed outlying units well beyond the range of the division's essentially line-of-sight communications gear.

- As the highest-level U.S. Army command element in Somalia, the 10th Division's headquarters element became the Army Forces [ARFOR] component of a Joint Task Force commanded by a U.S. Marine Corps general. Thus the division commander and his staff had to carry out a *range of unfamiliar tasks* that in war would normally be handled by higher Army echelons. Some of the higher-echelon attachments to the division were there to provide the skills and communications gear needed to perform these functions.

- Not shown in Figure 1 are the forces of friends and allies attached to the 10th Division for support of one kind or another. Nor does the figure highlight the many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and
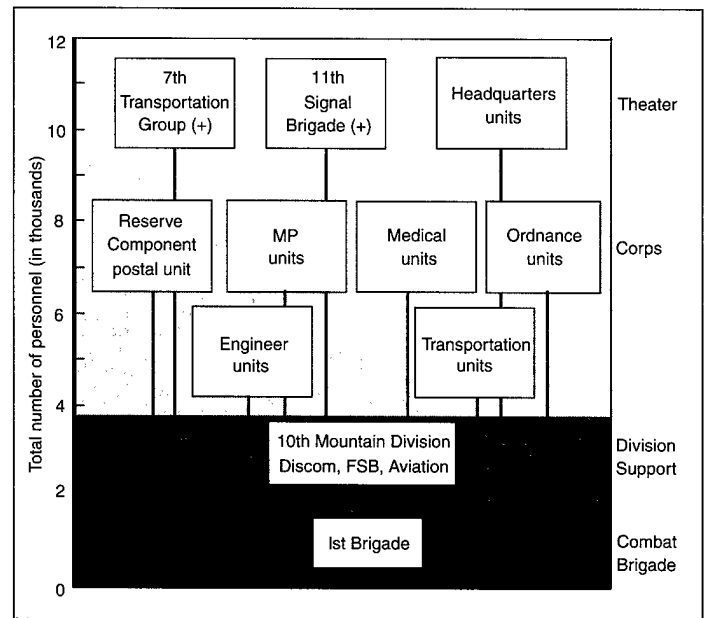

Figure 1—Army Forces in Somalia, 1993

nondefense U.S. government agencies with which the division had to coordinate activities. These and the division's humanitarian mission presented commanders and staffs at all levels with *sizable political-military challenges*.

Another dimension of the 10th Division's unique composition not shown in Figure 1 is the geographic spread from which it drew its subordinate units. Because the XVIII Airborne Corps, the division's parent headquarters, faced possible contingencies in Bosnia and Haiti, the division drew supporting units from across the United States. Given the speed with which the overall unit was created, these units had no opportunity to train together before arriving in Mogadishu. oOperating procedures had to be developed on the fly, resulting in a certain amount of "friction" early in the operation.

To be sure, the Somalia operation is an extreme example—a light division moved with little warning to a relatively undeveloped and distant theater and given a mission covering thousands of square kilometers of countryside. Yet in virtually all SASO cases examined we find some degree of the "stretch" patterns listed above. Given more time to plan for the occupation of Haiti, for example, the 10th Mountain Division was able to make itself into a Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters. But this required substantial staff augmentation from outside the division. In contrast, the 1st Cavalry Division needed less of this corps and theater army augmentation for its deployments to Bosnia in 1998–1999, as one would expect in the case of a

Table 1

Command, Control, and Communications (C3)

Patterns in SASO

- Higher-level reinforcements pushed to lower levels of command
  - Division C3 not geared to handle theater, corps assets

- Disparate force elements from dispersed posts often assembled "on the fly"
  - CJTF components may not meet or train before operations

- Broader command and political-military responsibilities at lower levels of command
  - Division becomes "ARFOR," possibly the JTF headquarters
  - Division may pick up foreign forces

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heavy division deploying to a relatively well-developed area of operations linked through a base in Hungary to NATO's well-established logistics capabilities. But it still required higher-level augmentation, and the political-military component of the Bosnia operation was even more daunting than it was in Somalia. Examination of a variety of Army SASO deployments highlights the recurring patterns shown in Table 1.

NATURE OF "EARLY-ENTRY" DEMANDS

That the Army has been able to accommodate to these patterns in the several operations other than war it has tackled since 1991 owes principally to the organization's long experience with "task organizing," or "tailoring"—that is, cross-attaching subordinate units to prepare for a specific mission. But the Army's experience with SASO pushes beyond traditional notions of task organization, beyond what the organization's training and technology are designed to handle.

Were the nation to conclude that it faced nothing but SASO for the next few decades, the Army might well consider fairly radical forms of reorganization to facilitate the kind of tailoring demanded by SASO. But of course the nation still asks the Army to be ready above all to tackle two major theater wars, making it imprudent for the Army to reorganize in ways that might hobble its warfighting abilities.

Yet the steps the Army needs to take to facilitate its response to SASO today are not at all out of line with the emerging demands of conventional war. For starters, analysis suggests that responding to the patterns shown in

Table 1 would help the Army in the crucial "early-entry" phase of major theater wars—an important phase of a post–Cold War warfighting capability. Recent RAND analysis, for example, indicates that initially deploying forces would be more effective if they traded some (but not all) of their close-in firepower for a deep attack capability. The close-in fight can rarely be avoided, but adroit use of deep strikes allows ground commanders to shape the close-in battle favorably for their own forces.[2] Deep-strike capabilities are normally located at corps and higher levels of the Army's warfighting hierarchy. Early-entry forces are normally much smaller. The optimum early-entry capability, in other words, would be created by pushing high-level capabilities (and the tools to control them properly) down to lower levels of the organization, much in the manner shown in Table 1.

Figure 2 shows the results of high-resolution simulations, done at RAND, that add more Apache helicopters and the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), armed with the new Brilliant Anti-tank (BAT) munition, to a typical division-ready brigade (DRB) of the 82d Airborne Division. For obvious reasons the brigade has been given the command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities needed to see and target distant enemy forces. In the top graph, the normal DRB, facing an enemy armored unit in open terrain, does not begin to see the enemy until he is within 15 kilometers and does not begin to attack until he is within 9 kilometers. This produces a sizable close-in battle 3 to 6 kilometers off the brigade's front. Armed with deep-strike and ISR assets, by contrast, the brigade commander is able to take on enemy units at 25 kilometers. The toll he extracts there produces a more manageable—and winnable—close-in fight.

The work shown in Figure 2 was part of a larger effort to improve the lethality and survivability of light units like the 82d Airborne Division. Logically, the organizational changes suggested by that work would offer the same benefits to the "medium-weight" force now embraced in the Army's new vision. Unless new technology can provide a medium-weight armored vehicle every bit as well protected as the Army's heavy M-1 tank, the survival of medium-weight units will depend importantly on their being linked into a C4ISR web that lets them see

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[2]See Randy Steeb, John Matsumura, et al., *Analytic Support to the Defense Science Board: Tactics and Technologies for 21st Century Military Superiority,* Santa Monica, CA: RAND, DB-198-A, 1997.

Chart 1 (top):
Number of kills by DRB (y-axis, 0 to 60)
Distance from center of main Blue Force (km) (x-axis, 1 to 25)

Callout: "Minimal kills by cannon artillery: most kills at 3–6 km"

Legend:
- Artillery
- Apache
- HMMWV-TOW
- Javelin
- AGS

Chart 2 (bottom):
Number of kills by DRB (y-axis, 0 to 60)
Distance from center of main Blue Force (km) (x-axis, 1 to 25)

Callout: "Kills throughout depth of battlefield: most by missile"

Legend:
- Missile
- Artillery
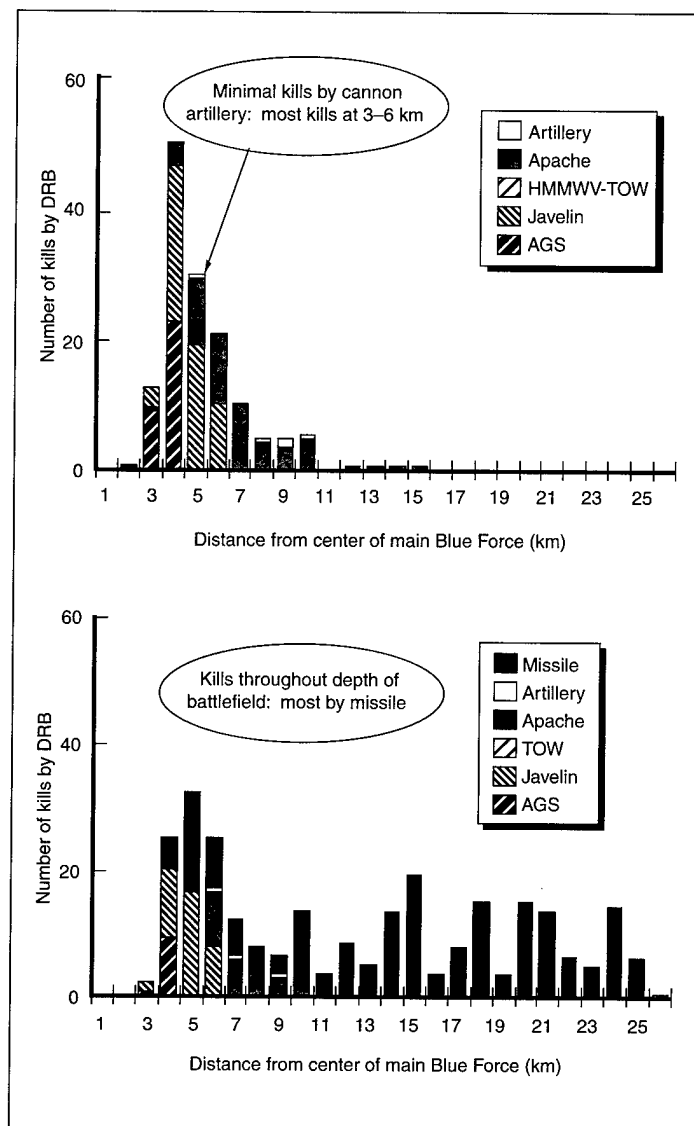- Apache
- TOW
- Javelin
- AGS

Figure 2—Effect of Deep Strike and ISR Assets

and strike enemy forces at great depth. Significantly, this notion is compatible with ongoing efforts at the Joint Forces Command to develop an integrated concept for decisive joint operations.

Overall, analysis (of the early-entry challenge) and experience (with an array of SASO) suggest that the post–Cold War world demands greater flexibility from the Army at lower levels of its hierarchy. The Army must be able to "mix and match" relatively small units of its force structure, drawn from dispersed locations and disparate commands, sometimes in a hurry. While traditional combat units—battalions, brigades, divisions—remain central to the Army's warfighting role, there is a growing demand for unusual unit combinations, in connection with war itself as well as SASO.

HOW THE ARMY CAN RESPOND

The increasing frequency of SASO among the Army's missions has prompted a debate within and outside the Army about how far the service must go in modifying its organization, doctrine, and equipment to facilitate handling these missions. Many continue to see SASO as a "lesser included case" for forces organized and trained for major war. These individuals note that Army operations in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia were successful, suggesting that a warfighting organization can stretch to meet SASO demands. These operations also demonstrate that warfighters can be converted into peacekeepers. Indeed, sometimes the best peacekeepers are trained warfighters whose formidable presence deters potential violators of the peace.

Those who disagree note the difficulty that Army divisions confronted in handling missions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia; division staffs are neither equipped nor staffed and trained to plug into a JTF, let alone manage forces deployed over hundreds of square miles. Some argue for the creation of a separate SASO force, a "peacekeeping" force alongside the Army's warfighting force. Others argue that at least some kinds of capabilities within the Army should be focused more explicitly on preparation for SASO.

The research behind this Issue Paper cannot answer all of these questions. But the Somalia case raises concerns about the "separate SASO force" idea, since the Army units organized to handle Somalia and Bosnia made extensive use of Army components needed for conventional war. Creating a wholly separate set of SASO capabilities thus would be wastefully redundant and probably unaffordable.[3] In this sense, the work summarized here supports the Army's current effort to ready all units to handle the "full spectrum" of potential operations. This work also suggests that the way to do this is to facilitate rapid reassembly of existing components, at the same time providing the training that makes warfighters better peacekeepers.

This in itself will require the creation of new capabilities, as well as new training routines. The Army needs to

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[3]For a broader set of arguments that question the value of a separate SASO force, see Jennifer Morrison Taw, David Persselin, and Maren Leed, *Meeting Peace Operations' Requirements While Maintaining MTW Readiness*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-921-A, 1998.

push down to division and brigade levels the kind of command, control, and intelligence assets it would normally make available to corps and theater army headquarters. This is already happening in the intelligence realm, where equipment like the Trojan Spirit remote terminal allows brigade and division commanders access through satellites to national-level intelligence assets. The Army now seeks to address the operational dimension of the challenge by redesigning its tactical and operational headquarters. The technical challenge here is formidable. Both division and brigade headquarters must be able to reach further *out* to control more dispersed units and *up* to a larger array of national intelligence and communications assets as well as to a Joint Task Force headquarters. Significantly, subordinate units will need augmentation to allow them to reach *back* to brigade and division headquarters so equipped.

Along with these technologies should come the means to link dispersed units "virtually," so that they can train while separated. This will make it easier for dispersed units notified of an upcoming operation to link and begin familiarizing and planning instantly—before they meet, often for the first time, as they land in a distant country to take on a new mission.

The service must rethink its training as well. SASO of course confronts the Army with the need to train its soldiers to be "peacekeepers," and to balance those skills with traditional "warfighting" competence. But the need for more agility draws our attention to the training of brigade and division staffs, which SASO confronts with a

greatly expanded range of demands and responsibilities. Division "mission essential task lists" (METL) are already being modified to include tasks related to linking to a JTF headquarters. But experience suggests that these staffs will have to grow larger to accommodate new capabilities and skills.

Leader training, too, needs reconsideration. The Army must continue to train warfighters at all levels. But clearly the increased prevalence of SASO means that these same leaders will routinely confront major political-military challenges while contending with a wider span of control. Training of leaders at all levels—including senior NCOs—should aim to improve their preparation for these challenges.

To the extent that the skills and equipment noted here exist at higher levels of the Army's combat hierarchy, adding agility is a matter of pushing these capabilities down. But some of these capabilities do not yet exist. All of the services, for example, are now wrestling with the challenges implied by the need for truly joint operations; it would be difficult to argue that any service is now ready to link itself fully and easily to a joint headquarters. And while the Army has begun to experiment with "virtual" links and training, there is much experimentation and technical work ahead before such links are perfected. In this important sense, the Army faces as significant a development effort in this area as it does in pursuing medium-weight fighting vehicles. Both efforts will be required to yield the agility the Army will need to handle the full range of missions it is likely to face in the years ahead.